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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE  
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND SEAFOOD AWARENESS  
STUDY COMMISSION

MARCH 1985

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REPORT TO THE  
1985 GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

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Executive Summary Report  
Agriculture, Forestry, and Seafood Awareness  
Study Commission

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General Findings and Recommendations Applicable to all Three Industries

- A. The Commission finds that marketing, the expansion of existing markets and development of new markets, is essential to the continued vitality of all three industries. A constantly changing and diversified economy creates many new challenges and opportunities that impact these industries.

Consequently, the Commission strongly recommends expanded support and funding for market development programs designed to expand or improve existing markets or develop new markets. Each agency has requested specific appropriations over the 85-87 biennium for market development programs. The Commission is on record as supporting funding for those programs.

- B. The issue of railroad abandonments throughout North Carolina is severely impacting the movement of agricultural and forest products. For example, the proposed abandonment of the Albemarle Sound Railroad Bridge poses a serious threat to the economy of eastern North Carolina.

The Commission recommends that the 1985 General Assembly address the issue of railroad abandonments, the economic impact on effected communities, and on the agribusiness, and forestry industries, and clearly delineate State efforts that can be taken to minimize abandonments and its adverse economic impact.

- C. The Commission is cognizant that the agriculture, forestry, and seafood industries have not always co-existed peacefully, and that efforts taken to address problems of one industry may adversely impact the other two.

Consequently, the Commission recommends a multi-disciplinary approach to all natural resources problems involving agriculture, forestry, and seafood and is on record in support of the concept of a Natural Resource Center for North Carolina. Such a Center would be designed to coordinate environmental and water management concerns of all three industries.

- D. The Commission has identified and studied a multitude of problems effecting the agriculture, forestry, and seafood industries. Much remains to be done, however.

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Consequently, the Commission recommends the continuation of this Study Commission as an on-going, permanent standing Legislative Commission to continue the work begun and serve as a vehicle through which problems adversely impacting the economic vitality of these industries can be addressed. Also the Commission recommends that 1985 be designated as the year of Agriculture, Forestry, and Seafood.

#### Major Findings and Recommendations Related to Agriculture

- A. The Agribusiness industry is the number one contributor to North Carolina's economy. However, the Commission finds that in previous years, agricultural programs designed to assist the farmer, have not kept pace with State funding of other, non-agricultural programs. In addition, recruitment of agribusiness related industries by the State of North Carolina has not been done with the same degree of zeal shown when recruiting other industries, particularly high-tech industries.

To address these shortcomings, the Commission fully supports the Department of Agriculture's expansion and capital budget requests for the 85-87 biennium. The Commission is deeply appreciative of the efforts already made by the Advisory Budget Commission and wishes to expand upon these efforts to secure additional funding for very worthwhile and needed programs, particularly market development.

To address the lack of emphasis placed on recruitment of agribusiness industries, the Commission recommends a reexamination of the State's industrial recruitment efforts by the General Assembly and strongly supports enactment of investment tax credits to lure such businesses to North Carolina.

- B. For many decades, agricultural research conducted by the State's traditional land grant institutions has provided farmers with many new and improved methods that increase efficiency. However, the Commission finds that funding for agricultural research has not kept pace with the needs of a rapidly diversifying sector of North Carolina's economy.

To address this finding, the Commission strongly supports the continuing efforts of the Agricultural Research Service and Extension Service and recommends approval of their funding requests for the 85-87 biennium. In addition, the Commission recommends additional funding for research and development of new agricultural and forest products economically feasible for North Carolina.

- C. The tobacco industry in North Carolina accounts for more than one third of the State's cash crop income. However, its importance relative to the economic growth of other crops and livestock is declining. Because of the continued potential for tobacco to contribute to the economic growth of North Carolina the Commission endorses a research proposal to develop a major biomedical program at East Carolina University designed to reduce human health concerns of cigarette smoking. Therefore, the Commission recommends a \$1.9 million appropriation over the next five years to East Carolina University for this purpose.

#### Major Findings and Recommendations Related to Forestry

- A. As another of the State's leading traditional industries, with an abundance of forests and forest tree products, the Commission finds that continued and improved management of this resource is necessary.

Consequently, the Commission recommends increased support for research and extension efforts undertaken by North Carolina State University and the Division of Forest Resources designed to reduce reforestation and manufacturing costs and encourage better forest management in North Carolina. The Commission also recommends that the General Assembly carefully review the Forest Development Act Program during the 1985 Session and appropriate additional funds to regain the ratio of assessments to appropriations. In addition, the Commission is in support of funding requests made by the Division of Forest Resources to improve or expand various programs.

- B. The Commission finds that development, use, and preservation of the State's forest resources require continuous development and refinement of long range plans and policies.

Therefore, the Commission endorses strengthening of the current Forestry Advisory Council so the Council can have a more meaningful role in the development of long-range plans for the State's forest resources.

#### Major Findings and Recommendations Related to Seafood

- A. North Carolina is blessed with an abundance of marine resources that support a diverse and growing seafood industry. However, the Commission finds that user group conflicts adversely impact the management and harvesting of these resources.

The Commission, therefore, is in support of conservation practices, education programs, and increased resources to improve the management capabilities of the Division of Marine Fisheries to properly manage the State's marine resources. In addition, the Commission supports the efforts of the Division of Marine Fisheries to develop seafood processing and marketing capabilities and recommends approval of funding requests of the 1985 General Assembly.

- B. The Commission is aware of the difficulties encountered by seafaring vessels to ingress and egress through Oregon Inlet and finds that such difficulties have an adverse impact on development of the Wanchese Harbor Seafood Industrial Park and the marketing of North Carolina seafood.

Consequently, the Commission encourages support of Congressional efforts to authorize and fund construction of jetties or other practical measures at Oregon Inlet. The Commission also urges continuing support from all of North Carolina's elected officials.

- C. The Commission is cognizant of the fact that the fisheries industry can be easily impacted because of the fragile nature of the resource. The nature of these impacts is many and varied including impacts from development, agriculture, silviculture, and the fisheries industry itself.

Therefore, the Commission recommends that incentives be made available for the implementation of best management practices in all sectors and strongly supports demonstration projects designed to reduce impact through use of appropriate, voluntary strategies. The Commission further recommends that multidisciplinary problem solving approaches be applied to problems affecting these industries.